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ABSTRACT

A study explored the relationships between 1) congruence of attitudes between principals and teacher candidates with different job qualifications, and 2) principals' attraction to teacher candidates. Concern was to test relationships expressed in Newcomb's ABX system of interpersonal attraction. In a simulated selection situation, elementary principals (N=140) rated an applicant for a teaching position. Principals were volunteers from a random sample of 500 drawn from all full-time elementary principals in New York State excluding New York City and Long Island. Instruments were the Education Scale (Kerlinger and Kaya, 1959) to secure principals' attitudes toward general educational practices and the Interpersonal Judgment Scale (Byrne, 1961) to measure their attraction to the hypothetical candidates presented to them. Teacher applicants were represented by written information in which the attitude congruence with the principal and the level of teacher qualifications were varied. The results of data analysis (two-way analysis of variance) suggest that 1) the similarity-dissimilarity of attitudes between principal and teacher candidates does affect principal attraction to the candidate with principals more attracted to those holding attitudes similar to their own and 2) effect of similarity-dissimilarity of attitudes seems to be more powerful than the effect of teacher candidate qualifications. (Author/JS)

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RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ATTITUDE CONGRUENCY AND ATTRACTION TO CANDIDATES IN TEACHER SELECTION*

by

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Introduction

The selection of teaching personnel is one of the main functions of educational administrators. The critical nature of this function may be readily seen in the development and implementation of the school educational program. Very often the administrator's main opportunity to initiate change or strengthen certain features of the curriculum rests with decisions he makes regarding the selection of teachers with the necessary competencies.

The present selection process in education may be classified into two major activities. First, the administrator reviews the placement folder of a teacher candidate in order to see if he meets the qualifications for the position. Then, if the candidate possesses the necessary qualifications, the administrator may invite him for a personal interview in order to "find out what he is like" and give him information about the school system.

Quite often, the interview focuses on the applicant's attitudes toward various ideas about education in general or attitudes toward practices in education. After the administrators

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have reviewed the records and "found out what he is like" in a personal interview, the candidate is selected or rejected.

Selection Interview - The State of the Art

The selection interview is a very important part of the selection process, yet it has a history of unreliable outcomes. Wagner (1949) reviewed the literature concerned with the employment interview. Of the 106 studies surveyed by Wagner, he reported that "only 25 of these report actual experiments. Eighty-one present a hodge-podge of contradicting opinions" (p.).

Huse (1962) conducted a study of different methods of predicting success. The methods of predicting success were based on portions of a real interview and/or psychometric data. He concluded that the ratings based on the interview, or ratings based on the interview plus test data, were no better than the predictions based on psychometric data alone.

In a similar vein, Walsh (1967) compared the accuracy of data gathered in three different conditions. These conditions were interviews, questionnaires, and personal data blanks. Half of the subjects who provided the information were supposed to provide untrue information. All three of the conditions provided accurate information about the true and deceptive candidates. There were no differences among the assessments of the subjects in all conditions.

In concluding his review of the selection interviews, Orman R. Wright, Jr. (1969) stated that

> The consistent finding that independent judges can assess interviewee behavior as validly and as accurately as the participant interviewer, has important implications for future research in the employment interview (p. 407).

Studies by Maier (1966) and Maier and Janzen (1967) suggest that interviewers base their judgments on some impressions rather than logic. Another study by Maier and Thurber (1968) supports the earlier findings of Maier. The latter study by Maier and Thurber tested judgments about deception attempts under three different conditions. The conditions were watchers (see and hear), listeners (hear), and readers (read a transcript of the interview). Listeners and readers made more accurate judgments of deception than watchers. Maier and Thurber suggested that the judgments seemed to be based on impressions or stimulus cues that are not precisely defined.

Byham (1968) examined the use of personnel research conducted in an industrial setting in selecting employees. He suggested that the collection of information about candidates is useless unless the selectors know how this information is related to job success. Personnel men rely heavily upon the past behavior of individuals as presented in the application blank and upon their own perceptions obtained during an interview with the candidate as a basis for their selection. Yet, Byham states that "...interviews are very inaccurate instruments. Obviously there

is much room for additional research" (Byham, 1968, p. 63).

The perceptions of the interviewer were a concern of Mayfield (1964), and as a result of his extensive research summary of the selection interview, he concluded that

> An interviewer is consistent in his approach to different interviewees;...When interviewers obtain the same information, they are likely to interpret or weigh it differently...The attitudes of interviewers do affect their interpretation of what the interviewee says... However, no definite statement can be made as to what attitudes are most biasing or the manner in which they change interpretations (p. 253).

The studies cited above highlight the confusion about the values of selection interviews. The reliability of this process seems to be doubted because of the variance in interviewer selection or rating decisions. The variance in selection decisions may be explained in terms of attraction based on perceptions of the candidates' attitudes.

A promising explanation of some of the factors affecting the decision-making process and hence the interview outcome was suggested by a study conducted by Byrne (1961). He investigated the relationships between interpersonal attraction and attitude similarity. He found that strangers with attitudes similar to a person were better liked and evaluated higher than strangers with attitudes dissimilar to the person.

Byrne's study, which was derived from Newcomb's system of interpersonal attraction, suggests that the decision to select or reject an individual is based, in part, upon the qualifications

attributed to the candidate and the opinions, attitudes, and beliefs he is perceived as holding. A relatively unexplored area of the selection process concerns relationships among job qualifications of the candidate, personal attitudes of the candidate, and the selector's subsequent orientation toward him. The study reported here was undertaken in order to examine these relationships which are part of the selection process and provide information about them.

Conceptual Framework

The basic rationale for this examination was Theodore Newcomb's system of interpersonal attraction (Newcomb, 1953, 1956, 1961). The system views attraction to an individual as a function of the perceived congruency of attitudes toward some important and relevant nonperson object and the qualities attributed to the other person.

Upon meeting a stranger, a person may feel a degree of attraction toward him. Attraction may be positive (he likes him) or negative (he does not like him). As he interacts with the stranger he begins to perceive the stranger's attitudes toward some idea that is important to him. Further attraction (positive or negative) depends on the congruency of the stranger's and the person's attitudes.

The relationships expressed above are based on the individual's perception of the stranger. Newcomb calls this the individual

system of orientation (see Figure 1).

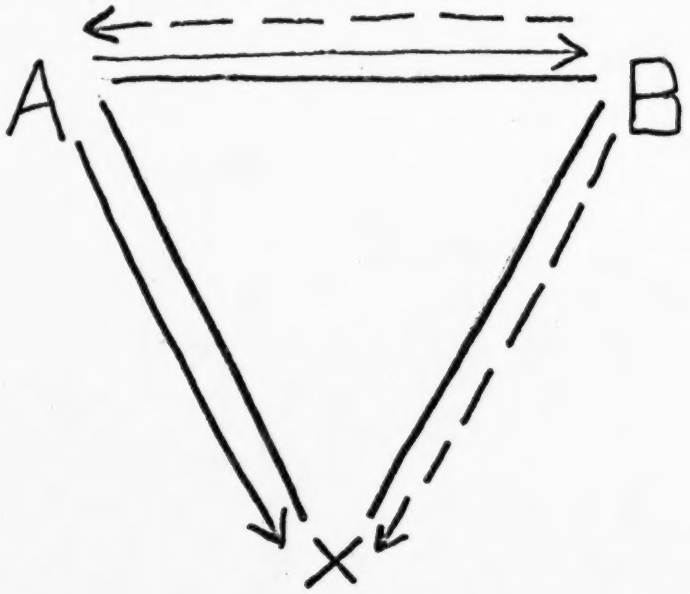

Figure 1: Individual System of Orientation

Arrows point from orienting person or object of orientation. Broken lines refer to orientations attributed by A to B (p. 9).

The essential ingredients for the existence of Newcomb's orientation system include:

1. An individual A, has an attitude either positive or negative toward some specifiable object X, that he regards as having common relevance to himself and to another person B, and that he assumes to have common impact upon both B and himself.

2. An individual A, attributes an attitude, either positive or negative, to another person B, regarding the same object X.

3. An individual A, has some degree of attraction, positive or negative, toward B (p. 10).

The individual system of orientation may be interpreted for our purposes as follows: the evaluator, after reviewing

qualification information of a candidate, feels some attraction (positive or negative) toward the candidate and judges this person in some manner. As the selection process continues, the evaluator in a selection interview perceives the candidate's attitudes toward the concepts contained in the questions he raises.

At the initial stage of the selection process, attraction to a candidate is based on "extra-system" properties. The written information regarding his qualifications for the position creates the attraction (positive or negative) toward the individual. Later, the focus of the relationship is on the congruence of attitudes and its effect on the orientation of the evaluator toward the teacher candidate.

When a discrepancy between the attitude of the evaluator and the candidate is perceived, the relationship between the evaluator and the candidate changes. The discrepancy or "strain" in the relationship may be decreased by a reduction in the strength of the evaluator's positive attraction toward the candidate (Newcomb, 1961).

The reduction in positive attraction toward someone who disagrees with our attitudes is interpreted as a function of the learned drive to be logical. Agreement with the evaluator's attitudes is rewarding to him since his own attitudes about some object are validated by others. When disagreement occurs, it is punishing, since the evaluator's conception of the environment is questioned. This disagreement questions his intelligence or adjustment. In order to obtain positive reinforcement the

evaluator would be attracted to those who agree with him and less attracted to those who disagree with him.

Research Hypotheses

The general research hypotheses for this study were developed from Newcomb's study of the acquaintance process. Referring to his system, he said

> Our system-like formulation includes not only the assumption that attitude change is influenced by attraction but also the converse--that change in attraction is influenced by existing attitudes. The former proposition is scarcely news... The latter proposition is not so well documented, and probably less commonly assumed by the proverbial man in the street...(p.).

The general hypotheses presented herein are concerned with the latter proposition set forth by Newcomb. The hypotheses are stated in terms of the situation used in this study: the principal is placed in a teacher selection situation and must evaluate a teacher candidate.

The first general hypothesis is concerned with the relationship between attraction and the similarity or dissimilarity of attitudes of the selector and the candidate. In a selection situation, consensual validation of the evaluator's beliefs may be rewarding. That is, when his ideas about life, attitudes toward people, or his other expressed beliefs are confirmed by others, this confirmation or consensus may constitute a reward

to the "self". Consensual invalidation of his beliefs may, on the other hand, threaten his self-image. He may feel less intelligent or maladjusted. Invalidation of the evaluator's ideas, beliefs, and attitudes then becomes punishing.

Attraction to an individual following the above assumptions is modified by the perceived rewards and punishments received from that individual. Thus, in a selection situation, it was hypothesized that

> I. Principals with attitudes similar to the teacher candidate will be more attracted to the teacher candidate than principals with attitudes dissimilar to the teacher candidate.

The second hypothesis is concerned with the relationships among the similarity-dissimilarity of attitudes between the principal and the candidate, the candidate's qualifications for a teaching position, and the principal's attraction to the candidate. The qualifications for a teaching position possessed by a candidate make him desirable or undesirable as a teacher in a school district. However, the selection situation often involves more than the assessment of teacher qualification records. Personal interviews are conducted to find out, among other things, what attitudes the candidate has toward education. The attitudes expressed by the candidate may alter the selector's perception of him.

The second general hypothesis with operational sub-hypotheses expresses this relationship in the following way:

II. The principals' attraction to teacher candidates is affected by the attitude similarity-dissimilarity between teacher candidates and the principals, and the qualifications of the teacher candidates.

A. Principals with attitudes similar to a teacher candidate with high qualifications will be more attracted to the candidate than principals with attitudes similar to a teacher candidate with low qualifications.

B. Principals with attitudes similar to a teacher candidate with high qualifications will be more attracted to the candidate than principals with attitudes dissimilar to a teacher candidate with high qualifications.

C. Principals with attitudes similar to a teacher candidate with high qualifications will be more attracted to the candidate than principals with attitudes dissimilar to a teacher candidate with low qualifications.

D. Principals with attitudes similar to a teacher candidate with low qualifications will be more attracted to the candidate than principals with attitudes dissimilar to a teacher candidate with high qualifications.

E. Principals with attitudes similar to a teacher candidate with low qualifications will be more attracted to the candidate than principals with attitudes dissimilar to a teacher candidate with low qualifications.

F. Principals with attitudes dissimilar to a teacher candidate with high qualifications will be more attracted to the candidate than principals with attitudes dissimilar to a teacher candidate with low qualifications.

Procedures

Sample

The population for this study consisted of full-time elementary school principals in New York State, excluding New York City and Long Island. A random sample of 500 principals was drawn from the population. One hundred forty principals actually participated in all phases of the study. The willingness to participate in the study was the criterion which qualified the principal for inclusion in the sample. There were no restrictions on sex, age, or other demographic variables.

The age range of the members of the study sample was from 27 to 65. Eighty-nine per cent of the subjects were male and 11 per cent female. The responses came from all areas of the state and from urban, suburban and rural school districts.

Instruments

Questionnaires were used to obtain descriptive information about the principals. The Education Scale (Kerlinger and Kaya, 1959) was used to secure the principals' attitudes toward general educational practices. The principals' attraction to the hypothetical candidate presented to them by written information was measured by the Interpersonal Judgment Scale (Byrne, 1961).

Grouping Variables

Measures were used to group the principals according to two factors: (1) similarity or dissimilarity of attitudes between principal and teacher candidate; and (2) expressed qualifications of the teacher candidate reviewed by the principal.

Development of similar-dissimilar attitude material. The Education Scale was used as a measure of the principals' attitudes toward educational practices. Similarity or dissimilarity of attitudes between the principal and the teacher candidate was created by the researcher. Teacher candidate responses on the Education Scale were constructed so that they were similar or dissimilar to the principal's. The bogus attitude scale was then presented to the principal as the teacher candidate's. The principals had been randomly assigned to receive either a candidate who had similar attitudes or a candidate who had dissimilar attitudes.

The scale was not scored for this study. The principals' responses were used to create the hypothetical candidates' responses to the scale. The candidates' responses were either similar or dissimilar to the principals'.

Validation of qualification material. Qualifications of the candidates were represented by written information about the candidates. A validation study was conducted and the results supported the claim for differentiating between a candidate with "high" qualifications for the position vacancy and a candidate with "low" qualifications for the position vacancy.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variable in this study was the principal's expressed attraction to the teacher candidate. The Interpersonal Judgment Scale (IJS) was used as a measure of this attraction. Two frequently asked sociometric questions formed the basis of the attraction dimension of the IJS. This dimension is concerned with personal feelings about the candidate and the candidate's desirability as a work partner.

The "desirability as a work partner" item of the attraction measure was slightly adapted for use in this study. The phrase "an experiment" was replaced by "the elementary schools." For example, "I believe that I would very much enjoy working with this person in an experiment" was changed to read "I believe that I would very much enjoy working with this person in the elementary school." No other item was changed.

Byrne and Nelson reported a split half-reliability of .85 for the attraction measure (Byrne and Nelson, 1965). The attraction measure is obtained by summing the scores of the two dimensions, yielding a combined score ranging from 2 to 14. The higher score indicates high attraction to the candidate.

Data Gathering Procedures

The principals in this study signified agreement to participate by completing a questionnaire and an attitude scale which were sent with a request for participation in the study.

When this information was received by the researcher, a bogus attitude scale was constructed from each principal's attitude scale. If he was assigned to receive written information about a candidate with similar attitudes, then an exact duplicate of the principal's responses was made. The duplicate copy of the principal's attitude scale was returned to that principal along with other candidate information.

If he was assigned to receive written information about a candidate with dissimilar attitudes, then a bogus attitude scale was completed by using the principal's responses. Earlier studies showed that the magnitude of the discrepancy in attitudes did affect attraction (Byrne and Griffitt, 1966). To control this possible source of variance, the bogus scale of the candidate who held dissimilar attitudes was constructed according to a prearranged response plan. The response plan was established such that the magnitude of the discrepancy was always four units of absolute discrepancy. The complete response plan is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Planned Response Pattern of Dissimilar Candidates

Principal Response	Candidate Response	Units of Absolute Discrepancy
+3	-1	4
+2	-2	4
+1	-3	4
-1	+3	4
-2	+2	4
-1	+1	4

All of the bogus attitude scales were represented to be the candidate's own responses. Also, all of the candidate's scales were hand-signed "candidate J.K." in order to support the claim of origin. The responses on the bogus attitude scales were written in pencil.

The other candidate information included with the attitude scales was the qualification information that had been validated in an earlier study. The results of the validation study supported the contention that the stimulus material did represent a candidate with high qualifications for the job described and a candidate with low qualifications for the job described.

The principal then received a selection situation package which was designed to place the participant in a teacher selection situation. Each principal read the following instructions contained in the situation letter:

> ...Recently you were notified that there would be a vacancy on your school staff at the end of the school year...As part of your screening process, you, with the assistance of your staff and other members of the school district prepared a job description for this fifth grade vacancy.
>
> You have just received an application for this position and the placement folder of the applicant. Review the job description for this vacancy first and then carefully read all of the information about the candidate.
>
> When you have finished reading the written information about the candidate, please evaluate him (her)...

The candidate information was arranged so that the qualification information about the candidate appeared first in a placement folder. Attitudinal information followed in an interview information folder.

Results - Discussion

A two-way analysis of variance was conducted to test for the main effects of similarity-dissimilarity of attitudes and the main effects of qualification levels. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Analysis of Variance:
Attitudes-Qualifications

Source of Variation	df	ss	MS	F
Similarity-Dissimilarity of Attitudes	1	629.037	629.037	141.692**
High-Low Qulaifications	1	27.022	27.022	6.087*
Attitudes x Qualifications	1	4.205	4.205	.947
Error	136	603.764		
Total	136	1264.028		

** $p < .001$
* $p < .025$

The critical value for significance at the .001 level is 11.38. The value of F for the attitude main effects determined by a two-way analysis of variance is 141.692, which is significant at the .01 level (see Table 3). The critical value for significance at the .025 level is 5.15.

This analysis indicates that there is a significant difference between the principal's attraction to teacher candidates with attitudes similar to his own and the principal's attraction to teacher candidates with attitudes dissimilar to his own. Hypothesis one, therefore, received support. The results of this analysis also indicate that there is a significant difference between the principal's attraction to "high qualified" and "low qualified" teacher candidates. The F value for the main effects of qualifications is 6.087, which is significant at the .025 level. The result tends to support the validation study of the stimulus material used to represent qualifications in the main study. No significant interaction effects were obtained between the qualification and attitude variables.

Hypotheses IIA through IIF were concerned with the differences among the principal's mean attraction score for the types of teacher candidates used in this study. The mean rating for each candidate is shown in Table 3.

An a priori decision was made to use the more conservative post-hoc Tuckey HSD Test to make pairwise comparisons among the means shown in Table 3. Tuckey's approximate HSD was computed because of the unequal number of cases in each condition.

Table 3

Mean Attraction Rating for Each Type of Teacher Candidate*

Qualifications	Attitudes		Total
	Similar	Dissimilar	
High	11.512	6.903	9.47
Low	10.281	6.368	8.15
Total	10.957	6.608	

* SAHQ = Similar Attitude - High Qualification
SALQ = Similar Attitude - Low Qualification
DAHQ = Dissimilar Attitude - High Qualification
DALQ = Dissimilar Attitude - Low Qualification

A comparison between means is declared to be significant if it exceeds HSD (Honestly Significant Difference). The HSD value at the .01 level of significance for the data presented in Table 3 was 1.57. The obtained differences among the means of the attraction score are listed in Table 4.

Hypotheses IIA through IIC were concerned with the rating of the candidate by the principals in the SAHQ condition. These hypotheses state that this candidate will receive a higher attraction rating than any other candidate. The mean rating of the SAHQ candidate was 11.52, which was significantly higher than any other candidate (see Table 4) except the SALQ candidate. Thus, only hypotheses IIB and IIC are supported.

Table 4

Differences Among Mean Attraction Scores
For Each Type of Teacher Candidate

	DALQ	DAHQ	SALQ	SAHQ
DALQ $\bar{X}$ = 6.36		.54	3.92*	5.15*
DAHQ $\bar{X}$ = 6.90			3.38*	4.61*
SALQ $\bar{X}$ = 10.28				1.23
SAHQ $\bar{X}$ = 11.51				

* $p < .01$

Hypotheses IID and IIE stated that the similar attitude-low qualified candidate would be more attractive to the principal than either the dissimilar attitude-high qualified candidate or the dissimilar attitude-low qualified candidate. The SALQ candidate received a rating of 10.281, which was the second highest rating among the four groups and was significantly different than the rating of the DAHQ or DALQ candidate (see Table 4). Therefore, Hypotheses IID and IIE were supported.

Hypothesis IIF stated that the DAHQ candidate would be more attractive to the principals than the DALQ candidate. The results in Table 4 show that the difference between the ratings, although favoring the DAHQ candidate, is not significant. It would appear that the difference between the high and low qualified candidates lie mainly between the similar attitude candidates.

Conclusions - Implications

The results of the analyses of data suggest two major conclusions. (1) In a teacher selection situation, the similarity-dissimilarity of attitudes between principal and teacher candidates does affect the principal's attraction to the teacher candidate. In addition, principals are more attracted to the candidates who hold similar attitudes than to candidates with dissimilar attitudes.

(2) The effect of similarity-dissimilarity of attitudes between principal and teacher candidate on principal attraction to the teacher candidate seems to be more powerful than the effect of the teacher candidate's qualifications.

The results suggest that attitude similarity would benefit the candidate for a position. This also implies that recruiting teams with high team agreement on important "organizational" attitudes may be an efficient method of obtaining teachers who are more compatible with the attitudinal set of the school district.

However, this same process could have unfortunate results if the attitude similarity was based on very personal or idiosyncratic attitudes of the recruiter. In such a situation potential employees may be rejected on the basis of attitudes not directly related to the vacancy.

Those concerned with training interviewers might wish to develop appropriate experiences which will help control the effect of the attitude congruence process. A simulation program

that had a great deal of potential for use in research and training in this area has been developed by Bolton (1970). Training experiences might begin with the development of a cognitive awareness of this process.

The second conclusion of this study suggests that perception of the qualifications may have been distorted by the attitude similarity or dissimilarity. This relationship suggested by Newcomb's individual system of orientation requires further research. One research question might be: Does attitude similarity-dissimilarity between candidate and recruiter affect the recruiter's perceptions of the candidate's performance record?

If further research reveals the attitude congruence process does indeed affect the weighting of a candidate's performance record, we might seriously consider different structures for the selection process in order to reduce this bias.

Finally, this study also indicates that social attraction research may be useful for predicting outcomes of the selection process. An attitudinal attraction model for conceptualizing the possible relationships between evaluator and candidate (Newcomb, 1956; Merritt, 1970) might be used to suggest and examine differences in ratings of candidates. A great deal of the controversy concerning the reliability of the interview is centered on the seemingly different ratings of a candidate by trained interviewers using the same scale. Perhaps such differences might be accounted for by the attitudinal congruence dimension examined in this study.

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